

Untitled

After coming off liberty the night before, Electricians Mate First Class Richard Knights lay asleep in a workshop near the bow of the USS Oklahoma. When the call for general quarters sounded, he headed toward his battle station in turret number four near the stern. The first torpedo hit, rupturing the hull.

He then tried to go back on the third deck but the doors were already "dogged down", forcing him to go to the other side of the ship. Once again he found his way blocked, so he climbed the nearest ladder. By this time, the ship had begun its fatal roll, so he had to walk with one foot on the floor and the other braced on the port side wall.

As he reached the main deck, the ship lay at a 45 degree angle. He grabbed the lifeline on the upper edge of the deck, crawling over the side of the dying ship. Once he was over the side, he pulled himself up the fender line separating the Oklahoma from the Maryland. He remembered looking behind him and thinking "I don't want to go up here." When he saw what he described as "boiling water" behind him, he thought "The H**l I don't." He continued to climb up the side until the ship stopped rolling, and he was sitting on top.

Because the hull of the ship was covered with oil from the ruptured tanks, he slid into the water. Soon after hitting the water he was picked up by a salvage boat. He found that he was too oil-covered to climb over the side of the small craft, so he pulled himself around to the stern and climbed in. As he was pulled on, the propeller of the rescue boat cut his foot, injuring him slightly. The boat dropped him off at Ford Island.

After reaching the relative safety of Ford Island, he found himself standing on a pier, shooting at Zeroes with a .45. He remembers shooting with a few other men at one that was going to bomb a nearby hangar. "The Jap blew up. I don't know if I hit it, but it blew up."

After the main attack was over, he drove a pickup truck with wounded men in the back to the BOQ, temporarily turned into a dispensary. He picked up ammunition for the machine gun stationed on the roof of the BOQ and started to drive around the building. An officer flagged him down, sending him to go clean up because he was covered with oil and blood.

Upon entering the dispensary, a nurse handed him a shot of whiskey and a cigarette. He was shaking so hard that he almost could not drink the whiskey and could not light his cigarette. He left the dispensary, grabbing a rifle and a bandoleer. The officer on hand sent him to a nearby barracks to sleep.

Paul, This is a copy of an interview my granddaughter had with Dick in 1994 when she had a English class project. Let me know if these are helpful to you.

Jean